

English Teaching in Nepal : Content, Context and Culture-Based Thought

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Abstract

Nepal has been teaching English from grade one. Teaching English as a foreign language has become inevitable due to the various purposes; academic, political, and commercial. Being nobody's mother tongue, it's a foreign language in Nepal. Though language is culture, there are three terms, content, context and culture vitally inseparable in relation to teaching language. The paradigm shift of language teaching, especially in ELT, from grammar-based instruction (GBI) to content-based instruction (CBI) is the existing need and practice. Widening individuals' mind-set into the diversified field in base of language element toward science, social studies, education and psychology enlightens them both in language and content. The content, context and culture need to include so as to motivate learners.

1. Introduction

English has been taught in Nepal as a foreign language (FL). Nepal is the out circle country of speaking English. Singapore, India and Hong Kong fall in the same zone. Similarly, USA, UK, Canada, Australia lie in the inner circle, and Japan, Taiwan, Korea are in the extending circle (Lee, ND). Lee mentioned these circles as the followings:

- a) Inner circle: In this, there are the following models:
 1. Acculturation model in second language acquisition (SLA)
 2. Intercultural communication model
3. b) Outer circle: Under this, there are the following phenomenon:
 4. World English Paradigm
 5. Pedagogy of cultural alternative
6. C) Expanding circle: In this, there are the following phenomenon:
 7. Teaching English as international language
 8. Reflective approach of cultural learning

In the global context, English language (ELT) has been a paradigm shift. In past there was only grammar-based language instruction (GBI). Teachers of ELT used to teach the sentences "I eat a mango." and change the sentence as "A mango is eaten by me." The plural of a pen is pens. And to be a sentence there should be at least two constituents like SV as in the sentence water boils. Here the only focus is on the grammatical items rather than the content and culture.

Nepalese students need to learn English to speak and academic purposes. In many countries students are to learn English to speak and to learn other school subjects like math, science, through the medium of English. (Baker & Westrup, 2003)

Language is a means of expression. For the purpose of understanding subject-based information, the students need to learn native like skills and meanings of cross-subjects like sociology, science, education, law and psychology. If a student is perfect in speaking

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and grammatical rules memorization, s/he may be unable to understand actual meaning of 'affirmative action', 'rule of law', 'gender'. In Nepalese context, CBI has been applied in the higher education of ELT. It promotes thinking skills. In Europe it is referred to as content and language integrated learning (CLIL) (Curtain,1995). Curtain says that content based instruction emphasizes a connection to real life and real world skills. In content based classes students have more opportunities to use the content knowledge and expertise they bring to class. They activate their prior knowledge which leads to increase learning of language and content knowledge. Similarly, Byrnes (2000) has suggested that content-based instruction provides for cognitive engagement tasks that are intrinsically interesting and cognitively engaging will lead to more and better opportunities for second language acquisition.

2. School Level ELT Curricula and CBI

The general objective of out of five are concerned with enthusiasm, creativity and positive attitude are as follows (CDC,2064 BS):

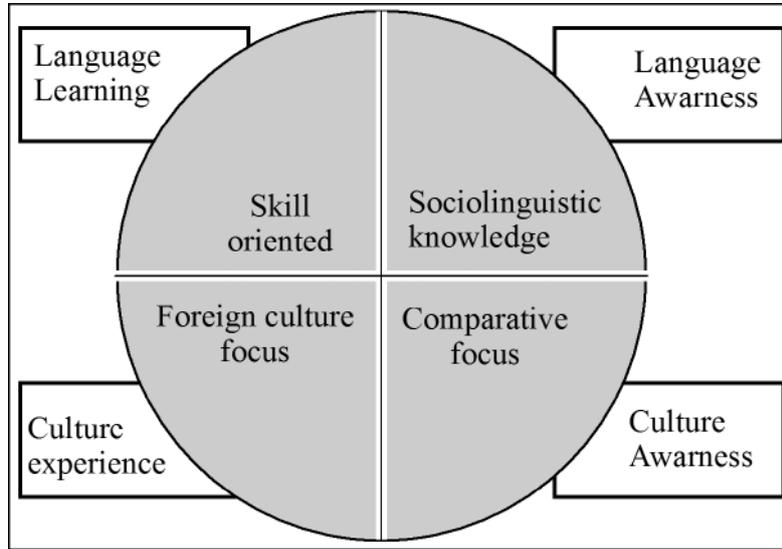
1. To help them develop enthusiasm for reading so that they will be responsive and knowledgeable readers.
2. To help them develop their potentialities in writing so that they can be creative writing.
3. To develop positive attitude towards learning English and build up confidence in using English.
4. The ELT curriculum of secondary level (CDC, 2064) has mentioned seven objectives out of which the following objectives have a clear indication of CBI approach. They are as follows:
5. Develop competence in understanding a variety of reading texts.
6. Develop an ability to use simple reference materials.
7. Read appreciate and enjoy literary texts.
8. Develop an awareness of contemporary social values and norms relevant to Nepal.

The above objectives even though they do not mention of CBI of ELT, have indications of the need to apply it so as to make language interesting and wide in use.

Language is culture. Culture depends on the social values and norms .The way of rote memorization is about teaching English rather than teach it. Daque (2009) in the presentation talks that there is need of active involvement of the learners in learning process. Teachers need to combine content and context by using authentic materials.

Rule memorization is a mechanical phenomenon. It is generalization as well. It does not stamp structure in the mind of learners. The native-like culture cannot exactly be interpreted into another culture. However, it can be contextualized in the learners' life like situation .Byram (1990s) has an integrated for cultural learning in ELT.

Figure 1



Source: (Byram, 1990)

The above figure shows that culture and language teaching are closely related. Language teaching focuses on language skills and the language skills tie up in societal culture.

3. Teaching

Teaching is both art and science. It is an art because teachers must have varieties of arts; art of speaking, art of reading, art writing which attract and motivate students in one hand and the teaching follows step by step process on the other hand. Most of the classes are elite focused. The best performers obtains higher score and the teaching learning focuses on those only (Luitel,2009). For the purpose of imparting knowledge, skill, and attitude toward the learners, Avsarala (2000) has presented the following.

Figure 2
Teaching Process

Teacher	Message	Taught
Well prepared No communication barrier	(CABS) Clear accurate, brief specific	Sensitized and receptive

Source (Avasarala,2000)

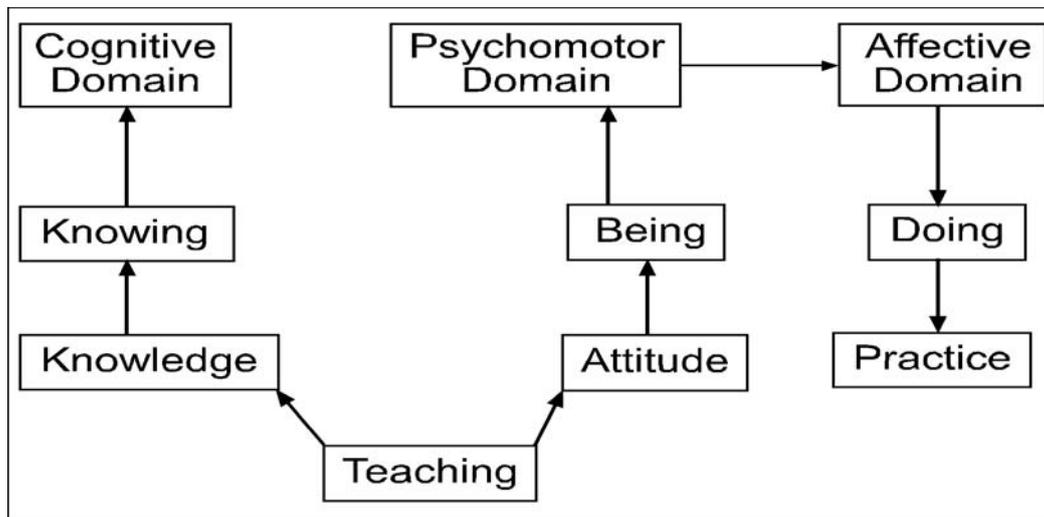
As mentioned in the above figure of teacher needs well preparation, clear and specific message sensitized and receptive of learners.

If teaching follows learning cycle, it will be effective. The content can be blended in the learning cycle. Thus, learning will be effective and contextualized. The following figure has been given by Avsarala (2000) gives a glimpse on it.

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Figure NO.3: Learning Cycle



English, in Nepal is taught for communication. The students need to involve in classroom practice. As mentioned above figure ,if teaching could hit on the attitude and make it positive by the teaching , then students move up to being ,doing and practice. It makes them habitual in the subject. Being a professional activity, in ELT teachers need to facilitate students in being learning cycle in speaking English.

Pica (2001) has mentioned the following say on the content-based L2 curricula.

"The versatility of academic content-based L2 curricula in shaping individual approach to classroom instruction provides further support to the perception that it is an optimal approach to classroom L2 learning. Academic content-based L2 curricula are fundamental to many popular approaches to classroom instruction, including those that are implemented in immersion, sheltered, adjunct, theme -based ,and language for specific purpose(LSP) classes and courses(Pica.2001,p.146)."

As mentioned above citation, content, context and culture can be attached in the teaching process. The content from social studies, sociology ,science and education may change attitude of the learners since learners find that learning language is meaningful in other fields as well.

When teaching begins in classroom, on ELT professional should know that what topic s/he is going to teach. S/he should keep in the mind that what learning outcomes need to be assured in the learners at the end of the teaching learning transaction. How can s/he bring variety in the classroom? What values do the learners comprise ? What content, basically, do they need in other subjects (cross-subject relations) ? If curriculum designers and teachers prepare and present ELT material in these regards, the ELT is practical. Teachers need to plan well. It is said that plan is half done. In making plan the following components are obligatory in it.ELT requires the following phases of teaching

- (a) Motivation (b) Presentation (c) Practice (d) Production

In the motivation teachers can arouse students' attention toward the topic. Presentation is teacher's transaction. The transaction should hit students' attitude and content simultaneously.

In the comparison of business it is the businessman's advertisement, that can attract all the clients in his/her shop and on the materials s/he advertized. Similarly, the practice is the real transaction of teachers in which each and every take it wear it and fit it in his/her life that will be adopted. Teachers should sell all the learners at a time. In the production phase, teacher's role is to stimulate and students can to produce pieces of language depending on the established structure. The stamped structure can comprise relevant contents of that the learners can define and/or include the terms in ELT situation.

4. Conclusion

Teachers are change agents of classroom practice. They are to read students from different angles; ability, interest, societal need and education standard. The learning process and teaching process should match so as to tie up the teaching process with learning process. The grammatical constituents need to deliver the societal values and beliefs so as make ELT contextual.

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